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EWING
CABAL
GENOLET
STA. MARIA
BLEE
X-MEN
RED

PLANET ARAKKO. THE GREAT RING.
Magneto takes the seat of Loss.
And as he sits, we must ask the most obvious question.
What is the meaning of loss?
ORA SERRATA, WHO SITS IN THE SEAT OF LAW.
What is the meaning of death?

[00_mutants_of_X]
[00_the_world__X]

X-MEN RED

BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH...

Storm, the Regent of Sol and member of the Great Ring, recruited Sunspot and Magneto to form her own Brotherhood of Mutants on Arakko.

Magneto challenged Tarn the Uncaring, a notoriously cruel Arakki mutant, to a duel in the Arena for Tarn's seat on the Great Ring. Sunspot, placing a strategic bet to turn Isca's mutant powers of always winning to Magneto's favor, ensured Tarn's loss and subsequent death.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the cosmos, several other events have just occurred that are sending ripples throughout the mutant community: including the recent assassination of the Shi'ar empress and Xavier's daughter, Xandra, and the secret of mutant resurrection being revealed on Earth.

[STORM]

[MAGNETO]

[SUNSPOT]

[ROCKSLIDE]

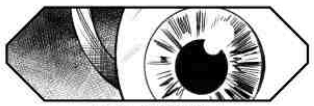
[JEAN GREY]

[HOPE SUMMERS]

[ELIXIR]

[ISCA THE UNBEATEN]

[XILO]


[ORA SERRATA]

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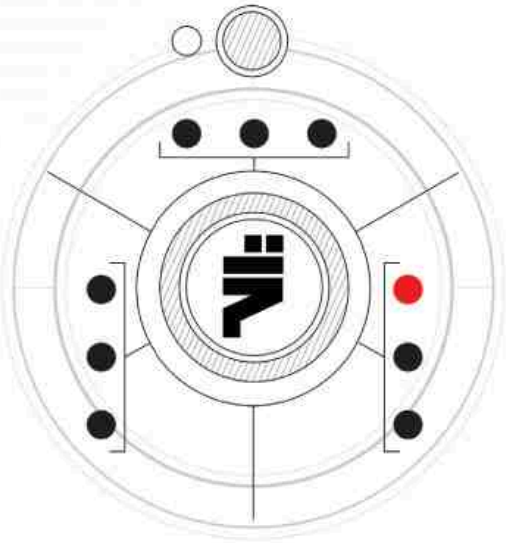
[00.RING.....0]

THE GREAT RING OF ARAKKO

_THE OPENING REMARKS OF ORA SERRATA.



IN THE CIRCLE, TO LOSE IS TO YIELD -- OR TO DIE.

DEATH, THEN, REPRESENTS A LOSS. IF YOU RISE AGAIN AFTER, IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO THE LOSS. IF A MEMBER OF THE GREAT RING FELLED IN THE CIRCLE WERE TO REGAIN THEIR LIFE...THEY WOULD NOT REGAIN THEIR SEAT.

SO IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN. THESE ARE QUESTIONS AS OLD AS THE WHITE SWORD'S ARMY OF RISEN DEAD. THE NEW KRAKOAN AGE DOES NOT GIVE THEM NEW ANSWERS.

THERE IS PRECEDENT HERE -- AND SO THERE IS LAW.

THE ARAKKII DO NOT DESIRE RESURRECTION. THAT IS THE WAY OF THE WHITE SWORD -- NOT OURS. *WE ARE NOT AFRAID OF A LIFE THAT ENDS*.

BUT WE ARE AWARE THAT LIFE MAY END. EVEN THOSE ARAKKII WHO DO NOT AGE ARE NOT IMMUNE FROM DEATH IN THE CIRCLE. WE UNDERSTAND THE POTENTIAL COST OF OUR HIGH POSITION.

AND THUS, WE WEIGH EACH DECISION WITH CARE -- KNOWING THAT WE MAY BE CHALLENGED FOR OUR SEATS, AND EACH CHALLENGE WE ACCEPT MAY BE THE LAST.

AS TARN LEARNED, NO ONE IS IMMUNE FROM THE RISK OF DEATH. AND NO ONE SHOULD BE IMMUNE -- FOR WHO FACES THE CHALLENGE WITHOUT FEELING THE RISK?

A POOR CHALLENGER. A POOR RULER.

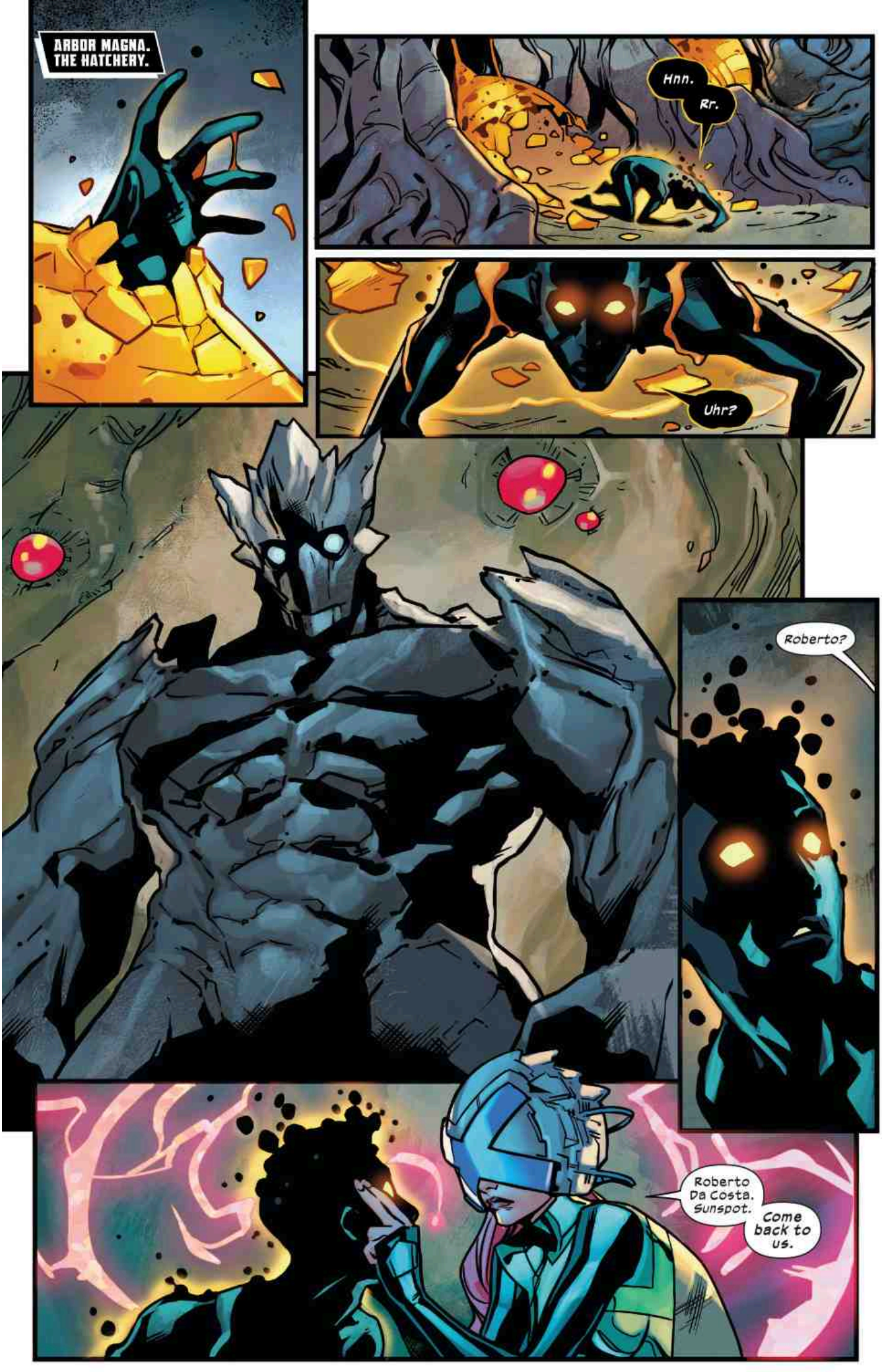
TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT ENEMY, ARAKKO KEEPS AN OPEN DOOR. THE KRAKOANS ARE AS WELCOME HERE AS ANY, EVEN WITH THEIR WEAK DESIRE FOR A LIFE WITHOUT THE RISKS OF LIFE. BUT SHOULD THAT WELCOME INCLUDE AN OPEN DOOR TO SERVE ON THE GREAT RING?

ORORO AND MAGNETO WON IN THE CIRCLE. BUT DID THEY TRULY FIGHT? WHAT COST WILL THEY PAY TO FIGHT AGAIN?

KRAKOANS HAVE A PLACE IN THE BROKEN LAND.

BUT WE MUST DECIDE IF THEY HAVE A PLACE HERE.

You're saying leadership demands *sacrifice*, Ora.
To lead a people, *one must be prepared to lose*--and lose ***everything.***
Do *you* have an opinion on that, *Isca the Unbeaten?*
I think I could debate the *necessity* of loss, Magneto.
And I'd *win* that debate-- ***as I win all things.***
Yes. I'm ***aware*** of your last "*victory*"-- against one of ***my students.***
While my back was turned...
You're ***sure*** you want to bring that up, *Krakoan?*
How you're only *here* because Da Costa used ***my power*** to help you ***cheat--***
Magneto won using his chosen weapon. ***No law was broken,*** Isca.
If Da Costa speaking a few *words* to you could *undermine* that... perhaps ***he*** is not the ***problem.***
Don't cast your evil eye at *me*, Ora. *You may go blind.*
As for Magneto's precious *student*...he's a ***Krakoan.***
They don't ***die*** like we do. That's the *point* of this meeting.
He's probably back ***already...***


ARBOR MAGNA.
THE HATCHERY.
Hnn.
Rr.
Uhr?
Roberto?
Roberto Da Costa. Sunspot.
Come back to us.

Da Costa does not die. And you, Isca? Do you die like us?
Of course I can die, Lodus Logos. I always win-- no matter the cost.
I'm sure a poet like you can imagine victory in death...
Yesss. But not in the Sssircle.
Can you ever be removed from the Sseat of Victory, Isssca?
When Genesis returns--or better, when we return to her. This is my sister's seat, Xilo.
I only keep it warm.
A throne on Arakko, then.
Ororo would have something to say about that.
I'm sure she would-- if she were here.
Where is our gracious queen?
Elsewhere. She's letting me speak for her--in this, we're of one mind.
Elsewhere...?
She's the Voice of Sol, Isca. Designated diplomatic spokesperson for the solar system.
Sometimes things come up.

[GALA....[represe]_00]
[CTIC....[ntative]_06]

SHI'AR EMERGENCY DIPLOMATIC MEETING

LOCATION: THE PROSCENIUM.\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\
REQUESTED PRIVACY LEVEL: ABSOLUTE.\\\\\\\\\\\\
FULL DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES HAVE BEEN INVOKED.\\\\\\\
LISTED ATTENDEES ARE AS FOLLOWS: \\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\

Oracle		**SHI'AR EMPIRE**	Superguardian. Aide to the Empress Xandra.	Present.
Dorrek VIII		**KREE/SKRULL EMPIRE**	Kree/Skrull hybrid.	Present.
Supreme Intelligence		**UTOPIAN KREE EMPIRE**	Other-dimensional gestalt intelligence system. "The Plex."	Unable to attend on short notice.
T'Challa of Wakanda		**INTERGALACTIC EMPIRE OF WAKANDA**	The Black Panther.	Present via hologram.
Ororo Munroe		**SOL SYSTEM**	Regent of Arakko. Galactic Council spokesperson for Sol.	Present.
Lactuca the Knower		**ARAKKO**	Requested by Storm as current holder of the Seat of Above-Us.	Refused to attend. Galactic politics deemed *"unimportant."*
Orbis Stellaris		**GALACTIC RIM COLLECTIVE**	Chief Diplomat for the Rimworlds. Businessball. Arms dealer (alleged).	Present.
Richard Rider		**GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY**	He stood when all else fell, and we remember.	Present.

THE PROSCENIUM. NEUTRAL DIPLOMATIC SPACE MAINTAINED BY THE GALACTIC COUNCIL.
T'Challa.
Still the ruler of *Intergalactic* Wakanda, I see...
Call it a transitional phase. It's good to *see* you again, Ororo.

I'm missing important business on **Arakko** for this.
Magneto knows where I stand--but even so, I'd rather be there *in person*.
Still-- it does give us an opportunity to *talk*. We said "*no secrets*."
I had to read about *mutant resurrection* in the ***Daily Bugle...****
**See X-MEN #12.*

Oh? Did ***Gentle*** not keep you informed in his *reports?*
It was never about ***state*** secrets, T'Challa. I didn't want the Galactus protocols or the backdoor codes for Kimoyo.
I just wanted the man I still *loved* not to *lie right to my face.*

Instead, you put a ***sleeper agent*** on Arakko, because you assumed I was too stupid to figure it out.*
I *gave* you your chance to come clean. You chose to keep playing your *great game.*
And I won't live on your chess-board.
**See BLACK PANTHER #3.*

No. Neither could ***I,*** in the end.
Nevertheless... ***the game goes on.***
Shall we?

T'Challa of Wakanda and Ororo of Sol-- you're the last to arrive.
We can begin-- and I see no need to draw out the awful truth.
Empress Xandra Neramani of the Shi'ar is dead.
What?
No...
I... had not heard...
Nobody could have. The only reason I know is because I was hit by the psychic scream she sent out as she died.
The entirety of our empress-- down to the spirals of her DNA--broadcast to the void in the instant she perished.

I saw her whole life-- then she was gone.
And... nobody knows? Not even the Shi'ar?
Deathbird is missing. But she put the protocol in place.
In the event of Xandra's death, we shore up support with our most important allies before we inform the people-- or even fellow Super-guardians.

Because when the knowledge is abroad, it will mean war.
The Empire is still unstable. Her absence will create a power vacuum--a gold rush for the throne.
Colony worlds will be forced to choose sides between the various factions jockeying to take her place.
If such a conflict were to turn astro-nuclear...

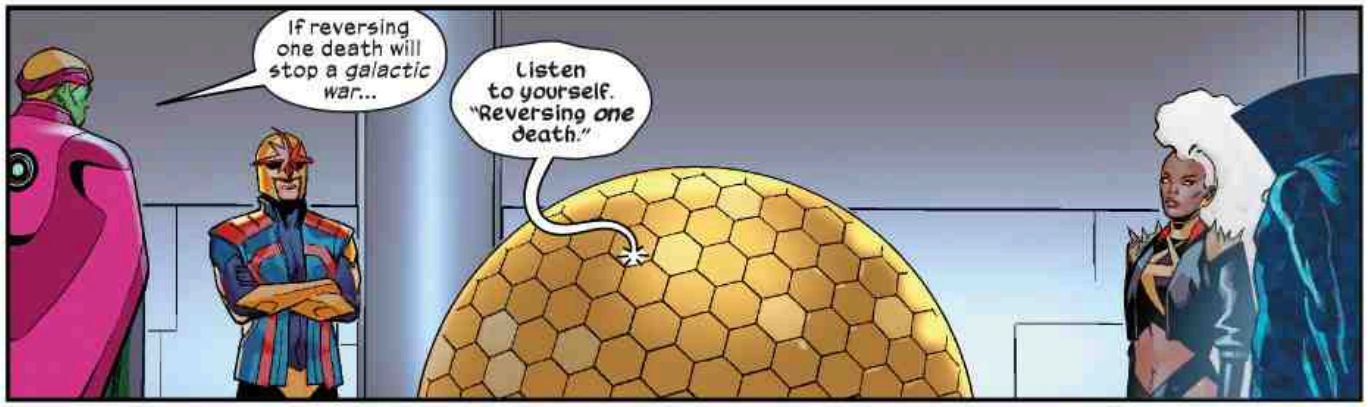
Casualties in the trillions.
At best.
And you're asking us to...what? Choose a side ourselves? Lend your ruling powers support against a coup?

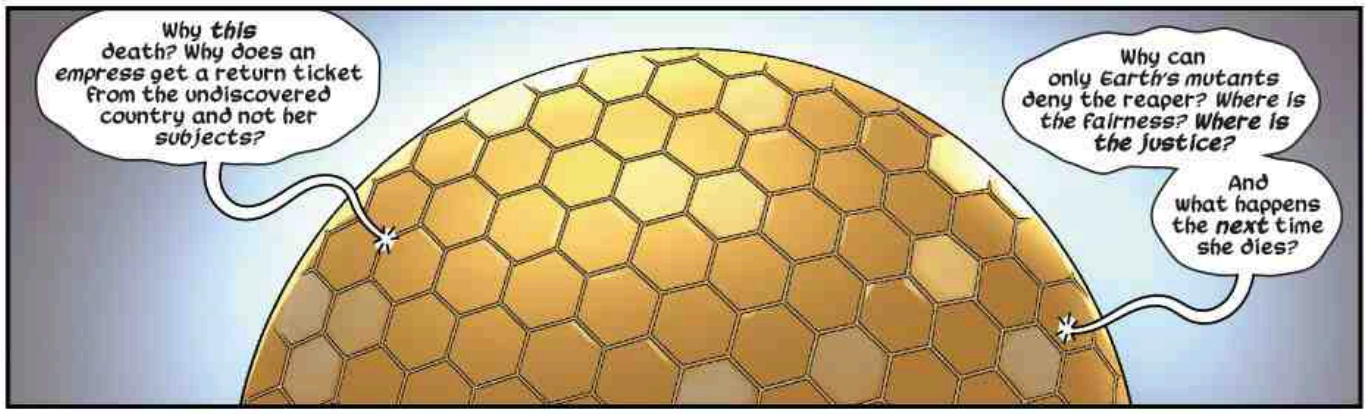
I fear interference from Intergalactic Wakanda in Shi'ar affairs would be taken poorly by both sides.
But...it's an open secret that Xandra is the daughter of Charles Xavier. If she has psychic gifts, she is surely a mutant herself.
Is there a simple solution we're not considering?

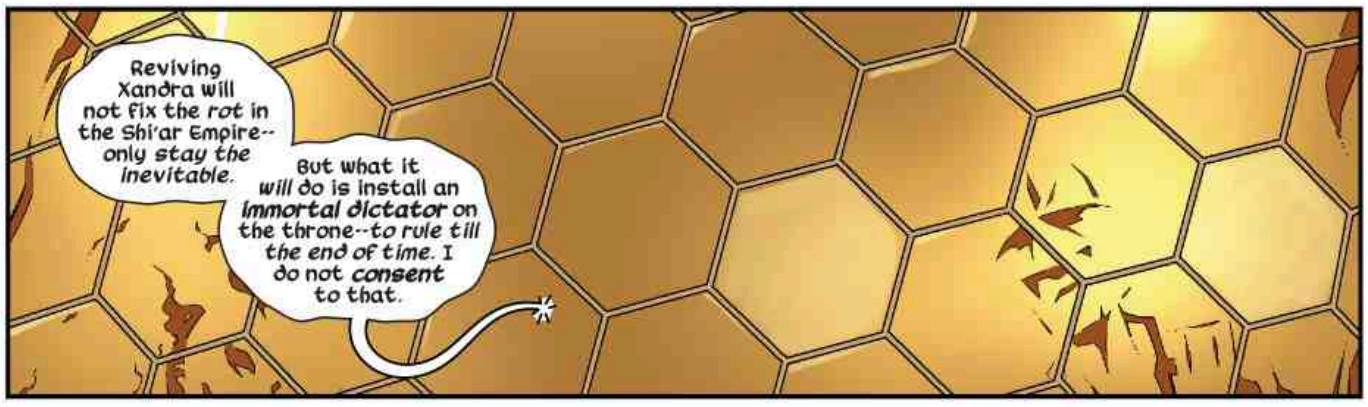
Can Krakoa bring her back?

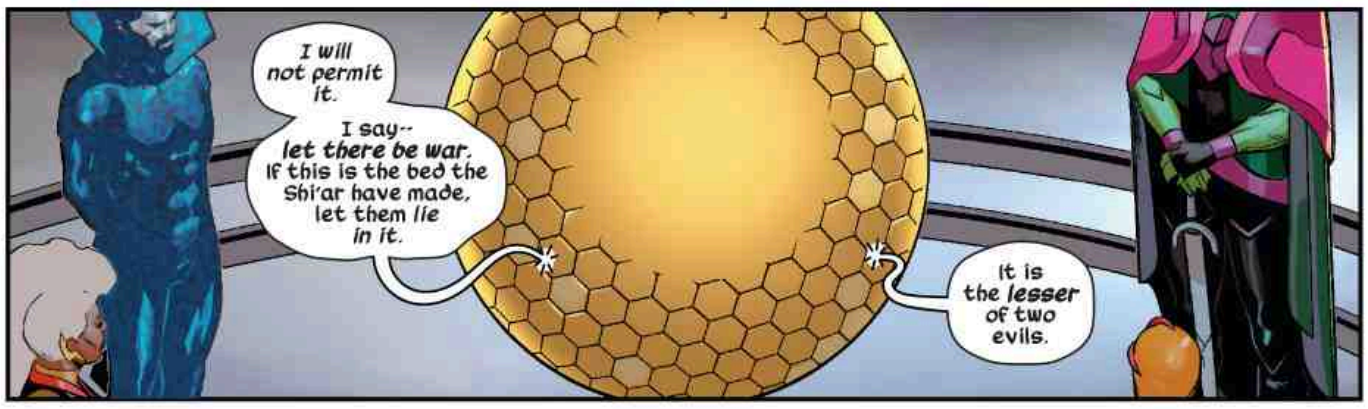
ARBOR MAGNA
Back once again for the renegade master.
I'll admit, I'm a little surprised not to see the Professor here. I know he prefers to resurrect his own students when he can.
In fact, I have a distinct memory of him reading me the riot act for getting killed last time...
The Professor's... resting. He had a long day.
But I suspect Ororo's going to want to talk about what happened when she gets back from space...
Well, bear in mind that my last backup was two days ago--I can only guess what I did to tick Isca off.
I suspect we've all got questions.
Does he often come down here?
Santo? Sometimes he watches the process.
I don't know why. The Santo I knew died in Otherworld--and any mutant who dies there can't be resurrected.
That guy's some... amalgam of all possible Santos. And he was as shocked about it as anyone.
So if anyone's earned the right to come watch the show, it's poor Rockslide.
It's not like anyone can really object...

I wish to register an immediate objection to the resurrection of Xandra Neramani.
The Galactic Rim says no.

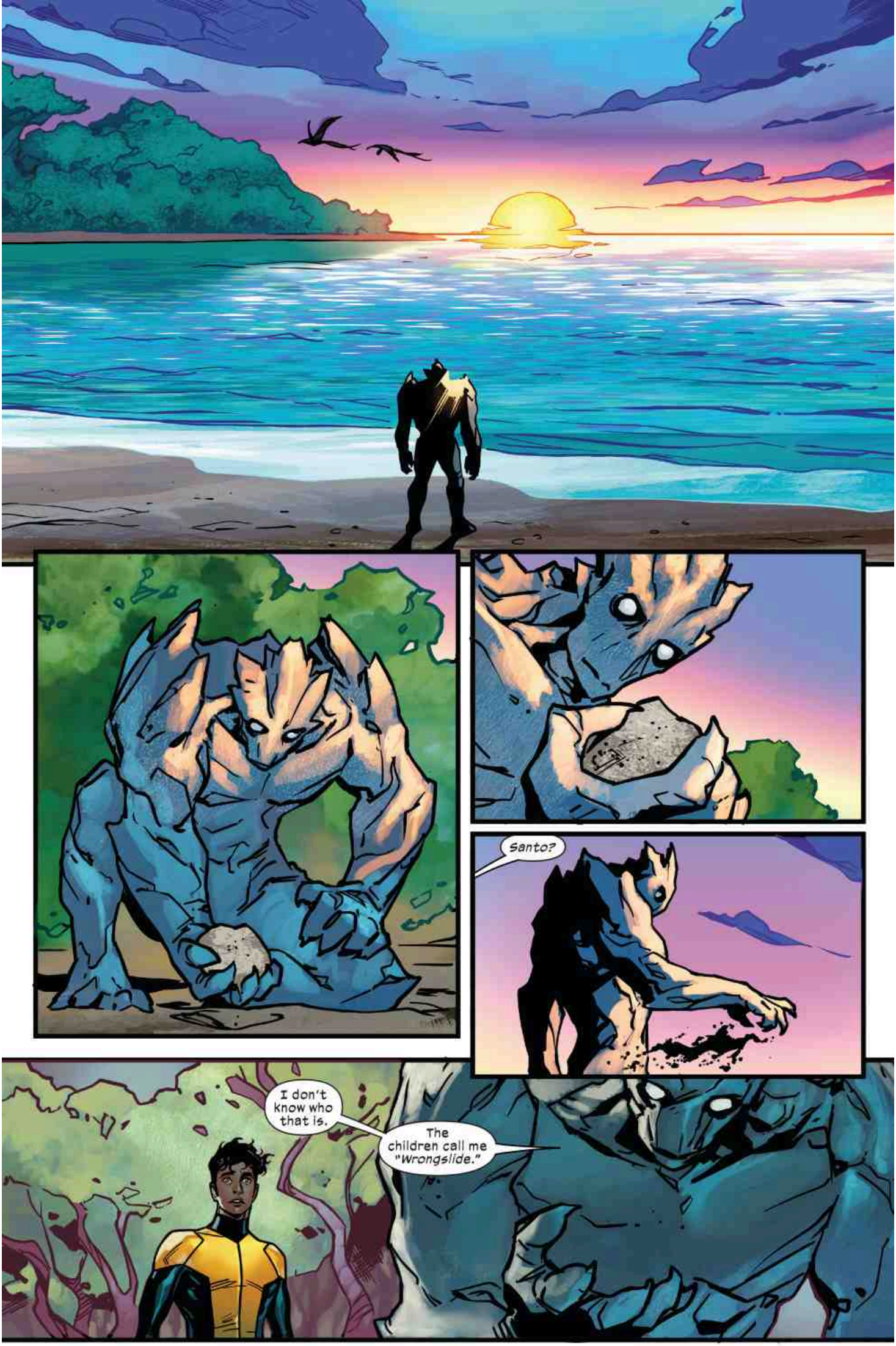

If reversing one death will stop a galactic war...
Listen to yourself. "Reversing one death."


Why this death? Why does an empress get a return ticket from the undiscovered country and not her subjects?
Why can only Earth's mutants deny the reaper? Where is the fairness? Where is the justice?
And what happens the next time she dies?

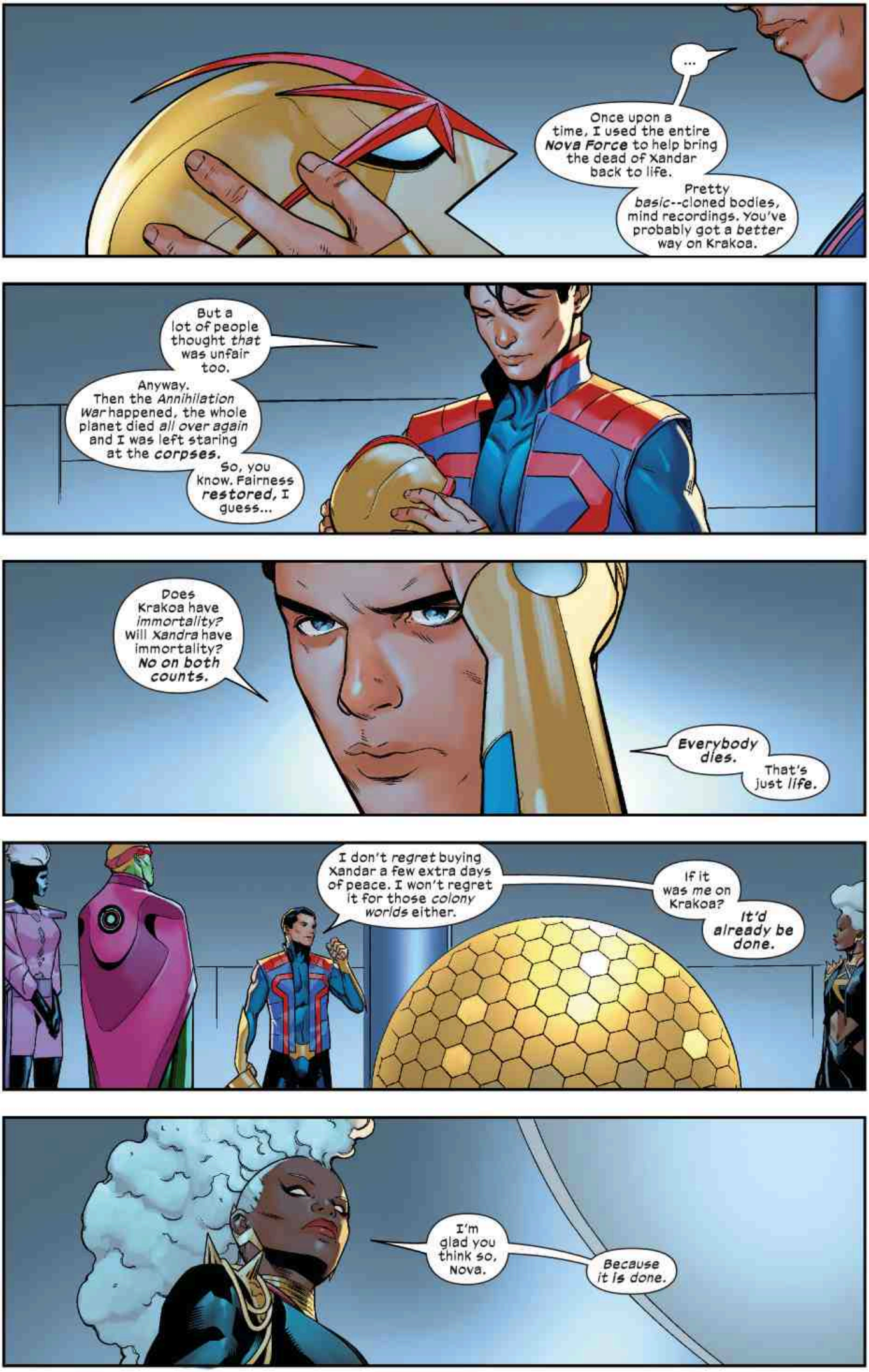

Reviving Xandra will not fix the rot in the Shi'ar Empire--only stay the inevitable.
But what it will do is install an immortal dictator on the throne--to rule till the end of time. I do not consent to that.


I will not permit it.
I say-- let there be war. If this is the bed the Shi'ar have made, let them lie in it.
It is the lesser of two evils.

And now we must decide.
Krakoans can serve on the Great Ring or they cannot. That is the question before us--
No.
Respectfully, Ora...no.
Krakoa is only a place. The precedent should be universal.
Should those who have removed themselves from death's reach rule those who have not?
That is the question...
...and this is our answer.
It's called a Cerebro Drive. Forge built it--our Omega technopath. He tinkers.
A similar principle to our larger Cerebro cradles--but more limited.
This version does not create backups--it only stores a preset selection.
...
Backups?
Mental records of Krakoans. The "I" that lives on--the self that draws the soul back to the new body.
If souls exist, of course.
Perhaps this is all we truly leave behind us. A handful of memories...
...held tight against the setting sun.


Santo?
I don't know who that is.
The children call me "Wrongslide."

Ouch.
Kids can be *cruel*, I guess...
Is *that* the intent?
I don't see it that way.
I don't want the name of somebody *lost*. ***That*** would be cruel--to ***everyone***.
"Wrongslide" is a sound that means ***only me***.
What's the sound that means only *you*?
Well...my *mutant name* is ***Sunspot***.
But I prefer ***Roberto***.
Ro-ber-to.
Did you *know* Santo?
I did.
His... ***death***...it hit *everyone* very hard.
It was so *arbitrary*. ***Casual***, even. One day he was *here*, the next...
He was so full of *life*, Wrongslide.
It doesn't seem fair.
It just doesn't seem fair.


...
Once upon a time, I used the entire Nova Force to help bring the dead of Xandar back to life.
Pretty basic--cloned bodies, mind recordings. You've probably got a better way on Krakoa.
But a lot of people thought that was unfair too.
Anyway. Then the Annihilation War happened, the whole planet died all over again and I was left staring at the corpses.
So, you know. Fairness restored, I guess...
Does Krakoa have immortality? Will Xandra have immortality? No on both counts.
Everybody dies.
That's just life.
I don't regret buying Xandar a few extra days of peace. I won't regret it for those colony worlds either.
If it was me on Krakoa?
It'd already be done.
I'm glad you think so, Nova.
Because it is done.

What?
How does Krakoa even know? If you brought a listening device to this meeting--
Think, Oracle.

That psychic wave you caught--a broadcast, you called it? Did you think that was meant for you?
If Xandra has enough power to throw her entire being across the stars--think where she got that power from.

"Think who has the power to catch it.
"Charles Xavier-- perhaps the universe's most powerful telepath.

"A man who--when offered the choice and the chance--
There...
There is still hope... still...

"--will forever choose life over death."
Hope! Convene the Five! Now!
Sinister-- construct this DNA sequence at once!
At once!

I appreciate Oracle *calling* this meeting. It's good to know these things *early.*
But there was never a ***debate*** to be had over this, Orbis Stellaris.

Mutantkind does not need *your permission to live--**or to thrive.***
Understand *that*...and perhaps our *miracles* will surprise you ***less.***
Good day.

You have something *more* to say, Nova?
Just that there's a lot of instability in the air right now. The ***Reckoning***... this latest thing with the ***Shi'ar***...
...my ***Nova-sense*** is starting to *tingle* again.

My therapist says I *fixate* on things--*and I do*--but I still think we're trending ***toward*** something. Maybe a ***big*** something.
And I think ***Arakko***--the ***Diplomatic Zone***--might be the *focal point.*
Mind if I come *visit* for a while?

As long as you like, Richard. *You'll fit right in.*
And for what it's worth? I think you're ***right.*** Trouble *is* coming--*from all directions.*
Having *your* perspective certainly won't *hurt* us...

I hurt people by being here.
They see me and see their *friend*. Then they *remember*.
And it *hurts* them-- I ***see*** it hurt them.
I'm a hole in the world. A *tombstone* for someone they wish was here.
That isn't fair.
It's not fair that I make people *sad* when I'm so ***happy***.
It's so beautiful to be *here*, Roberto. Just to ***be*** here.
And it only lasts so long.
Mm. Even with the ***Five***, it only lasts so long. That was the lesson Santo *taught* us.
Death can be *denied, postponed, gamed*--but it can't be *avoided*. ***Everyone dies.***
That's just *life*...
Yes.
It's *life*.

Ha!
Is that what you offer us, Magneto? Your Krakoan version of immortality-- a life so small you can keep it safe in a box?
Do you think we want that?
NO, ISCA.
KRSCH
And neither do I.

That was my backup--and Storm's. The only copies--and no more will be recorded.
We two no longer have the Krakoan insurance.
If we are to defend Arakko, we must be of Arakko. We understand the logic.
We understand the cost.
There are other ways back, of course. Other doors. My daughter built one.
But to come that way... you have to want to return.
As Ororo said-- "To everything a season."
I find myself in autumn...
...and I fear winter.
I've seen what comes in with the cold of centuries. What can hide, through life after life...even from yourself...
What would I become, with endless time? I fear it, Isca. I fear it.
I do not fear a life that ends.

You know...
...I think I want to die in *Otherworld.*
Not right *now...?*
NO! Not for a *long, long time.*
But when the stone that's me is slowing on the water, then I'll go through the gate.
And when it *is* my time... I'll lie down in the flowers and give myself back to the *everything.*
And the Five will bring back someone ***new.***
And they'll be *alive.* They'll see what I see.
They'll see the ***beauty.***
I'll have shared it.
...
Can I ask you something, Wrongslide?

Have you been to *Arakko* yet?

NEXT

"War"

05

ISSUE:
GAMBIT #2
KNIGHTS OF X #3
MARAUDERS #4
X-MEN RED #4
X-MEN UNLIMITED: X-MEN GREEN #2
IMMORTAL X-MEN #4
LEGION OF X #3
NEW MUTANTS #27
X-MEN: HELLFIRE GALA #1
X-TERMINATORS #1

ZONE